

Who Knew

by Looks good in Black

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Summary: During the battle on Earth, moments before the front half of the Forward Unto Dawn returns, a mysterious Spartan saves the lives of a small band of Marines. Co written with TheDarkOne123321.

1. Chapter 1

_Living in the past is a luxury none of us can afford. _

_We must learn from it, but we cannot live there. _

It is impossible to plan for the now - the future is ever fleeting.

_ The future is where we must live._

_ The future is what we must plan for._

Who Knew

Chapter 1

Bullets clattered overhead. Burst of plasma seared through the hull of a Pelican. The constant pounding of Scorpions in the distance beat like some ancient drum. A group of Marines, low on ammo and desperate for cover, dive behind the smoldering ruin of their supposed back-up's Warthog. Things fall silent.

After a pause and a few hand signals, one of the Marines leans around the edge of the Warthog and scans the area. Focusing his eyes, he sees a blue hulk speeding closer, shrouded in dust. Moments later, he realizes what he's looking out at, but before he has time to shout "Wraith!", the enormous blue explosion of the tank's mortar makes contact a little too close for comfort.

The rest of the Marines behind the Warthog immediately move into

action. Like a singly body, the five Marines move out of the cover of the Warthog and get into position. Their sniper takes out the Brute on the hood-mounted turret before it has any chance to fire back. The rest of the Marines empty their Assault Rifles at the Wraith in attempts to frighten its pilot out of the battle. They realize too late, however, that their futile attempt at intimidation is failing. Their sniper, in a last-ditch effort at survival, throws down his rifle, and readies a plasma grenade - the last in their supply. After a short prayer and careful aim, he lets go. It sticks.

The Wraith, too, knowing its impending death, launches its own hopeless attack. As the little blue flame melts deeper into the hull, the pilot diverts all power from its main cannon to its rear thrusters. This sends the hulking tank speeding forward towards the hopeless Marines. The grenade explodes, and for a moment the Marines relax. However, the mess of flaming metal bursts through the explosion, its own momentum propelling it forward. The Marines, seconds away from death, close eyes and tighten grips as they brace for impact.

Several moments pass and they feel no pain. The brave sniper opens his eyes and looks up to see a Spartan standing in front of them, half a moment away from impact. In perfect timing the Spartan slams its hands down, launching the Wraith over all of their heads. The other Marines look up and see the Spartan standing before them. "Chief we thought you were on the Ark." The Spartan turns around.

"I'm sorry boys, but you've got the wrong Spartan.," it replies.

"What? A woman?" The sniper asks.

"Not expect a female Spartan?" She remarks.

"It isn't that, I just- I just wasn't expecting another Spartan period." He replies.

"Looks like its your lucky day then gentlemen." She says. Behind her a Pelican lands. "Now command wants to move all remaining units to the portal. Mount up."

2. Chapter 2

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Chapter 2

The Pelican glides slowly over the ruined city of Voi. The portal glows brightly in the distance. Everyone is silent. Everyone is watching. Remembering.

"I can't believe it," remarks the sniper. He stares at the empty battle field below, and slowly shakes his head.

"I remember what it was like to live here, before the war ever found Earth. We thought we were safe. We thought we were invincible.
'There's no way they will get to Earth. We won't let them.'"

He lets out a sigh.

"I didn't think I would ever enlist. No one here saw any _reason_ for it - the war was so far away... But we were still wary, and we were watching. We watched as planet after planet disappeared - entire _systems_ even - and everything got a bit tense. Then we heard about Reach, and the Spartan II's..."

He looks to the front of the Pelican, to the Spartan that just saved his life.

"...and we felt invincible again."

At this point, everyone aboard has turned to listen to him. Hardly any of them were here before the war, and those that were had come only months ago.

"But then word got to us about Reach, and what happened, and then we got scared. Real scared. That's when I decided that I wasn't going to sit around and watch the news. That's when I signed up. I didn't know _anything_ about the Covenant, who they were, where they came from - but I knew what they were planning to do. And that was why I signed up: for Earth. My home. It was my job to protect it."

He lets his head fall back against his seat. His eyes stare at the ceiling, lost in memory. He closes his eyes for a moments, and sighs once more. When his eyes are opened, they focus directly on the Spartan.

"But now my home is ash and dust..."

The Pelican is silent once again, and everyone's eyes have moved to the Spartan. She stares back for a moment, then rises and moves to stand before the sniper.

"No one wanted this to happen," she says quietly. "But it is not over. You're still alive, and you still have a planet to save."

The sniper straightens. He feels the familiar warmth of hope course through his body. They all dio.

The Pelican begins to slow down - they are nearing the portal. Spread below them is a maze of tents and portable command centers, all of it very temporary, and all of it very unorganized. Warthogs zip back and forth between it all, carrying orders and soldiers back and forth. Behind it all floats the portal.

The Marines bounce as the Pelican sets down. One of its wheels was lost, which creates a very rough landing. The Marines begin to pile out of the back of the Pelican, and assemble at the edge of the dusty clearing that serves as a landing pad. The sniper, who is apparently the commander of these few men, turns back after a few feet.

"You aren't staying?" he shouts over the engines. The Spartan still stands in the back of the dropship, one of her hands holding on to the rear-mounted turret. Her other hand points to the portal. The Marine slowly nods and turns back to his men. He begins to walk back, but it is a heavy step. He can hear the Pelican's engines pitch rise as it prepares for take off, and he closes his eyes. Hope is fading.

"When I come back..." he hears Spartan shout back to him. He stops and raises his head, but does not turn.

"...we will rebuild it." With that, the Pelican lifts off the ground. The other Marines raise their arms, half saluting, half shielding their eyes from the dust. Just before the dust billows, and everything passes from view for those few moments, one of the Marines looks to his commander, and sees him slowly smile.

Above, The Spartan watches the Marines until the Pelican turns and they are cut from her view. She never really worked enough with the Marines to really get close to them. To understand them. And Spartans, well, they aren't much for conversation. But something about that Marine's story, about how devoted he was to his planet, it sent a very human feeling through her otherwise inhuman, calculating mind. It didn't answer all the questions, and it didn't explain what made her want to keep fighting. But it gave her something. A feeling deep inside her that didn't clear anything up, or resolve any conflict, but it told her someday that everything would be clear. Everything would be resolved. That someday, this would all be over. And that was when she realized what it was. That Marine. His story. His spirit.

Hope. It had given her, a Spartan, hope.

She looks one last time back at the makeshift city before sitting back down in her seat. She lets her head rest against the wall behind her and closes her eyes.

"We'll rebuild it all."

End
file.